

CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by the Northern Ecumenical Institute

Sigtuna, Sweden

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No. 3

February 24th, 1955.

DENMARK

Kaj Munk Film Great Success.

The well-known Danish film director Carl Th. Dreyer's version of Kaj Munk's play "The Word" has had a tremendous success. The film has been generally acclaimed by the critics as one of the very best Danish films, a work of permanent artistic value and quite worthy to rank with Carl Th. Dreyer's famous "Day of Wrath".

Kaj Munk's play is a forceful dramatic presentation of the problem of faith. Even the powerful scene in the last act, where the principal female character is raised from the dead, is credibly portrayed. Even a critic who is generally hostile to Christianity admitted in his review that he had been deeply moved by the film.

The film was taken on the west coast of Jutland in that part of the country where the poet-clergyman Kaj Munk lived and where he was murdered in 1944 by the Gestapo. The film is a worthy monument to his memory.

Carl Th. Dreyer has further stated that he is still negotiating with an American film company concerning a monumental film on the life of Christ to be made in Palestine, and he hopes that the plans can be realized in the course of a few years.

Folk Highschool to be Founded in Greenland.

The activities of several non-Lutheran churches and the steadily increasing abuse of alcohol are two of the problems dealt with by the primate of the Danish church, Dr. Fuglsang-Damgaard, in an article on the church and cultural life in Greenland published in a journal dealing

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with church affairs in Greenland.

In contrast to opinions voiced in several other quarters demanding a ban on the activities of non-Lutheran churches in Greenland, the Bishop feels that the non-Lutheran activity should only be countered by spiritual weapons. The Danish Dean, Dr. Michael Neiendam, who has made an intensive study of the non-Lutheran churches is to visit Greenland this summer, and several books dealing with these churches are to appear in an effort to counteract the non-Lutheran activity that has begun in recent years.

Alcoholism has become a serious problem in Greenland and the church is taking steps to combat it by an educational campaign on the harmfulness of drinking, and by a visit which the chairman of the Christian Temperance Movement "Blue Cross", the Rev. Børge E. Andersen, is to make in Greenland this summer.

And finally the Bishop tells of plans to establish a folk highschool in Greenland. The commemorative fund in honour of the Danish poet Kaj Munk has granted a large sum towards the realisation of this plan.

#### Conference for Luther Scholars in Aarhus in 1956.

In 1956 the University of Aarhus is to be the scene of a conference for Luther scholars from all over the world at the invitation of the Lutheran World Federation. Not only Lutheran theologians are to take part in the conference, but Luther specialists from other churches are also to be invited.

The leader of the theological department of the Lutheran World Federation, dr. Vilmos Vajta, and the chairman of the Federation's commission of theologians, Professor Regin Prenter, Aarhus, are busy making the practical arrangements for the conference which may be expected to be an important event in view of the great advances made during the last 10 years in the study of Luther.

#### Large Ecumenical Meeting in Copenhagen.

The Ecumenical Council in Denmark recently held a large ecumenical meeting in Copenhagen where the problems from the Evanston conference were in the centre of the programme. About 1.000 people had accepted the invitation to the meeting where three of the Danish participants in the Evanston conference told of their impressions. A band from the Salvation Army played, a boys' choir from the YMCA sang classical and modern church music, the Evanston film was shown, and Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard closed with a prayer for the unity of the church.

In connection with the meeting a large exhibition of materials and pictures concerning the Evanston conference and ecumenical work attracted a good deal of attention



### Ecumenical Tour Through Copenhagen Streets.

The Danish division of the Fellowship of St. Albans and St. Sergius working for a better understanding between the Orthodox Church and the Western churches, especially in liturgical matters, has tried an unusual experiment with great success. Invitations were sent out for an "ecumenical walk" in Copenhagen, and the evening began with a service in a Danish Lutheran church. Then the participants went together to the Russian Orthodox Church where the Russian priest spoke and the congregation took part in a Danish translation of the Russian liturgy. This was followed by a short service in the chief Roman Catholic church under the leadership of a Catholic priest and ended with a joint recital of the apostles' creed. The next stopping place was the Anglican church, and the tour ended after a service in the Swedish Lutheran church with a social hour where participants from various church bodies had a chance to speak. The evening gave a wonderful feeling of fellowship across the barriers separating the churches.

### Danish Churchmen in Favour of Participation in Polish Youth Festival.

It has attracted a good deal of attention in Danish church quarters that two of the leading men in Christian youth work have publicly recommended young people to take part in the youth festival planned to take place in Poland this summer which is strongly Leftist. The two men are the chairman of the Grundtvigian youth societies, Rev. H. Dons Christensen, and the secretary general for the YMCA and YWCA, Rev. Orla Møller, who both attended the meeting of the Democratic Youth Group in Peking by invitation. With reference to the criticism of this view that have been voiced Rev. Dons Christensen says:

"For many years we have spoken of an Iron Curtain. Nobody has been allowed to go behind it. Now there is a possibility of doing so. Probably because the Government now thinks it is safe. But why not make use of the opportunity? Do not we have faith in ourselves and in that which is the basis of our life, do we not feel that we are strong enough? Dare we not open our minds and listen to what others have to say in an effort to understand them as far as it is possible? Dare we not place that which is the expression of our civilisation and our lives face to face with others?"

### FINLAND

#### Why is Communism So Strong?

The well-known Finland-Swedish painter Lennart Segerstråle has made an attempt to give an answer to the question "Why is Communism so strong?" in "Församlingsbladet", the weekly of the Swedish diocese in Finland. He points out that it is the only militant ideology which has a plan of action for the whole world and an ideologically trained force in every country prepared to carry it out. Faith in this ideology is the secret

Democracy for Young Canadians Series

more question of economics. It is a religious question to its most ardent adherents.

Lennart Segerstråle then raises the question whether the future of the world must be dictated by materialism. Whether it might not just as well be a dictatorship under the guidance of the Holy Spirit with men listening to the will of God and together seeking to realize it. He believes that the reason why there is so little power among the Christians is that we let our own wills rule us instead of wholeheartedly submitting to God's will and letting Him realize His will through us.

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At Evanston it was asserted that "Christ is the hope of the world" and that the realization of "the body of Christ" must be the answer. But millions of people do not understand this language. They understand the concrete world-ideology proclaimed by materialism and they understand the still more concrete answer given by Moral Re-Armament: Consider that which separates you from God and man in the light of the 4 absolutes, experience new power and a change of heart, and obey the Holy Spirit. Do not speak of Christ, but live with the cross He gives you, listen to Him and obey Him. Let us remember that man can be different from what he is. And if so then the world too can be different. This is the stone in David's sling.

#### NORWAY

#### Bill Proposed to Ensure Religious Liberty.

The free churches in Norway have long desired a law ensuring religious liberty in place of the present Dissenter Act (the word "dissenter" is used as a common designation for all Christians outside the National Lutheran Church). A bill for such a law has been proposed to the Government by a member of the Parliament, Carl Bonnevie, who has based his draught on the Swedish Religious Liberty Act and on the United Nations' declaration on human rights.

The bill establishes the fundamental principles of religious liberty, and with regard to religious education in the schools it says that teachers who take upon themselves the task of teaching religion must do so in accordance with the standing regulations of the school laws and plans of instruction.

Hitherto "dissenters" have been barred from teaching religion in schools, as all religious instruction in public schools must be in conformity with the Lutheran confession. At the same time that Carl Bonnevie introduced his bill, he called upon the Government to make a change in the school laws so that a thorough knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus and of the history of Christianity is emphasized as the main purpose of religious instruction.



### 10,000 Bibles Placed in Hotel Rooms.

The Norwegian Association of Christian Salesmen and Businessmen has just celebrated its 25 years jubilee, and at the same time the number of Bibles distributed by the Association throughout the country has reached a total of 10.000.

### Large Gifts to Commemorative Church for King Håkon.

The collection for the Norwegian Seamen's Mission church in Copenhagen which is to be built as a gift from the Norwegian church to King Håkon on the occasion of his Golden Jubilee this year is progressing satisfactorily. So far well over 500.000 Norwegian Crowns have been collected, about 300.000 of which come from Denmark, and the collection has only just started. The aim is to collect 2 - 3 million Crowns in all.

### The Church Making Preparations for Television.

As there are plans of introducing television into Norway the Norwegian Christian Film Council under the chairmanship of Dr. C. Bonnevie-Svendsen has called upon the Norwegian Bishops' Conference to appoint a religious television committee, and the bishops have now elected such a committee with Dr. Bonnevie-Svendsen as chairman.

### The Methodist Bishop of the Northern Countries to Go to Africa.

Towards the end of July the leader of the Methodist churches in the Northern countries, Bishop Odd Hagen, is to leave for Africa where for four months he will visit the Methodist mission fields in South and West Africa.

Bishop Hagen recently presided at a meeting in Oslo where a number of representatives from the Northern Methodist churches discussed common problems and planned their work for the coming years. It was announced that the 100 years anniversary of the Norwegian Methodist Church will be celebrated in 1956 and that the chief festivities will probably be held at Sarpsborg, the Methodist centre in Norway.

### Candidates for Confirmation Presented to Congregation.

The clergy of Oslo have introduced a new custom which has been a great success right from the start, viz. the presentation to the congregation of the new candidates for confirmation immediately after their names have been entered for the preparatory classes prior to confirmation. The presentation in Oslo Cathedral was carried out in the following way: the candidates were gathered in the choir and rose one by one as their names were called out. Before this roll call one of the clergymen gave a short talk, and afterwards a New Testament was presented to each of the young people.

### Correction.

Due to a misunderstanding which we deplore "Church News" No. 1 mentioned a number of protests against a bill proposing to change the Norwegian Law against quacks, as this might place legal barriers in the way of the practice of healing by prayer. However, the protests were not advanced against a concrete bill,



but against a passage in the royal instructions to the committee appointed to work on this amendment. The instructions desired the committee to consider the effects of a possible ban on the type of religious practice carried out by certain foreign preachers (healing by prayer). The committee which was appointed almost a year ago has not yet finished its work, but it is expected that its recommendations will be published sometime this year.

#### SWEDEN

##### Is the Swedish National Church Really Lutheran?

"Can the Swedish National Church still be considered as belonging to the Lutheran world? Does not its new interest for the church service and the nature of the church betray a leaning towards Anglican views rather than the corresponding tendencies in the Lutheran churches? And seeing that it has preserved the apostolic succession even after the Reformation, does it not consider itself more closely allied to Anglicanism than to Lutheranism?"

These serious and startling questions were raised by the Director of the Lutheran World Federation's information department in Geneva, Dr. Hans Bolewski, in an article he wrote for the Swedish church weekly "Vår Kyrka" after taking part in the consecration of the new bishop of Stockholm, Dr. Ljungberg, in Uppsala Cathedral.

One of the things Dr. Bolewski noticed at the ceremony was the fact that only representatives from churches with apostolic succession took part in the laying on of hands, thus the Anglican bishop did so, whereas a bishop from Norway did not.

Dr. Bolewski does not at all share the view that the church of Sweden is specially well suited to form a bridge between Anglicanism and Lutheranism because this Lutheran church has experienced a new orientation "towards the English State Church", and he closes by writing: "It would be a blessing if the Swedish church as a whole could find a way to fellowship with the other Lutheran churches in the world".

Commenting on this article, the Swedish Archbishop, Dr. Yngve Brilioth, says that he had not himself remarked that any of the bishops assisting at the consecration had not taken part in the laying on of hands, but if that was the case it must be due to a private decision by the bishop in question, or simply to the fact that the number of assisting bishops was so great that they could not all get near enough. Any distinction between different categories of assisting bishops was wholly unpremeditated.

As to the Swedish church and Lutheranism the Archbishop says: "The Swedish church has never left the Lutheran church family. It is true that the historical development in latter years has brought us into closer relationship than before with



the Anglican church brotherhood and we value this connection. But we have always been careful to point out to our Anglican friends that our relationship with the Church of England must not entail any change whatever in our connection with the other Lutheran churches. I have myself most emphatically pointed this out to the present Archbishop of Canterbury. I can only deplore that Dr. Bolewski has so completely misunderstood the situation. When he writes that it would be a blessing if the Swedish church as a whole could find a way to fellowship with other Lutheran churches in the world, this seems to imply that the Swedish church has not discharged its duties as a member of the Lutheran World Federation. However much we value our membership we cannot consider the Lutheran World Federation a superior authority with the power of curtailing our liberty towards non-Lutheran churches.

#### Chou En-Lai Invites Swedish Missionary to China.

The Swedish missionary, Gustav Nyström, who accompanied UN's Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, as interpreter to the negotiations in Peking about the American pilots was invited by Chou En-Lai to come back to China with his family and preach. Gustav Nyström was formerly a missionary in China.

During his stay in Peking Mr. Nyström had the opportunity of speaking with Rev. Marcus Cheng, vice-chairman of China's United Church and well-known in Sweden from two visits there in the twenties. Among other things Rev. Cheng told Mr. Nyström that there are 200 students at the three theological seminaries in Peking, Nanking and Chunking. Mr. Nyström also spoke over the telephone with Wang Ming-tao who had been reported by newspapers abroad to have been executed. He is still preaching.

#### New Bishop of Strängnäs.

The former Dean of Strängnäs, Dr. Gösta Lundström, has been appointed bishop of the diocese of Strängnäs. The new bishop is 50 years old.

#### Broadcasting Station Run by the Pentecostal Movement to Start this Summer.

In spite of the fact that the Swedish Pentecostal Movement as already mentioned in Church News, No. 1, was refused permission to export a large amount of money collected for the purpose of transmitting evangelizing broadcasts from a wireless station in Tangier, the plan has not been abandoned and work on the Swedish broadcasts is progressing. The station is being built for money collected in other countries and it is hoped that broadcasting can begin on July 1st. There will be transmissions in 20 languages and the station is to have three directional antennas, one towards Scandinavia, one towards Greece, Turkey and Asia Minor, and one towards the mission fields in Africa.

#### Shorter Theological Training.

The Chancellor of the Swedish universities and Bishop Anders Nygren of Lund have together made a suggestion to the Swedish Government for re-organizing and shortening the theological university course in an effort to ensure a permanent



increase of theological candidates. It is proposed that the candidates must present themselves for a comprehensive examination in all subjects after three semesters, but with relatively small demands as to factual knowledge, and that training for a B.D. can be completed in 7 semesters.

It is suggested that the reform should take effect as from July 1st, 1955.

#### The Free Churches Oppose Commercial Television.

In Sweden television is still in its initial stages and a proposal has been made to raise funds for as comprehensive transmissions as possible by introducing commercials in television. The free churches have protested against this suggestion as they are afraid that it would entail a lowering of the cultural level of the programmes. It is suggested that television should be entirely financed by licence fees.

This appears from a detailed report published by the committee for co-operation between the free churches, discussing a number of problems connected with television. It recommends an extensive religious programme on television, pointing out that the religious features on the radio are some of the most popular, and suggesting several forms of religious programmes.

#### Plebiscite on the Relationship Between Church and State.

Several liberal members of the Swedish Parliament have proposed that an advisory plebiscite be held in 1957 to decide whether the organizational bonds connecting church and state should be abolished. The reason adduced is that under present conditions people who do not share the faith of the church may obtain great influence in church affairs. Whether the proposal will meet with approval in the Swedish Parliament is perhaps another question.

#### Swedish Parliament to Decide Whether Women May Take Orders?

Two members of the Swedish Liberal Party who belong to the free churches have suggested in Parliament that the Government should consider allowing women to take orders in the Swedish National Church. They point out that this will partly alleviate the imminent lack of clergymen in the Swedish church and refer to the fact that a commission under the chairmanship of Bishop Torsten Bohlin in 1950 approved this measure with 10 votes against 1. But many church circles are decidedly opposed to the ordination of women and there are many indications that a majority in Parliament will refer the matter to the Church Convocation of the National Church.

The bishops of the National Church have just issued a statement concerning the establishment of special lay-workers' positions open to women. Their most important duties will be spiritual guidance, the preaching of the Gospel, religious instruction and work among children and young people.

